



# *Special Town Meeting*

*November 18, 2021*

*Article 10*

*Reducing Noise from Landscape  
Maintenance Equipment*

*Motion revised November 17, 2021*



# Summary

- **Article 10 would revise the Noise Bylaw (§80) to protect residents from noise pollution from landscape maintenance equipment**
  - Restricts the hours of use of all powered equipment
  - Restricts the use of gas-powered leaf blowers (GLBs) to fall and spring cleanups
  - Does not prohibit the use of any type of powered landscaping equipment
- **Why GLBs are the primary focus**
  - Extreme noise, highly toxic emissions, and adverse environmental effects
- **Even a single GLB far exceeds the noise limit in current code (§80-3)**



# Background

- **Article 10 would not create new noise limits**
  - Would only bring landscaping work more nearly into compliance with current state and town law (which limits noise to an increase of 10dBA above ambient levels)
  - Enforcement of current noise bylaw to limit landscaping noise is impractical without amendment



# How polluting are GLBs?

- **CA Air Resources Board: GLBs and similar equipment produce more ozone than all CA cars**
- **Emissions from using a single GLB for 1 hour are comparable to driving a Toyota Camry for 1,100 miles**
- **A 2-stroke GLB emits approximately 300 times the non-methane hydrocarbons as a Ford Raptor pickup truck**
- **EPA: 2-stroke GLBs emit large amounts of numerous toxic substances, including carcinogens, e.g., benzene**







# Board of Health endorsement

After discussion, the Board of Health voted unanimously to support Article 10 with the following motion:

The Board of Health concurs with authoritative bodies, mainly the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), that noise at these levels and substantial exposure to particulate matter and chemical emissions (VOCs), causes a health risk to operators.







# How noisy are GLBs and BLBs?

	Brand	Type	Sound pressure @ ear (dBA)	Sound pressure @ 50 feet (dBA)
	EGO LB6003	BLB	88	64
	Greenworks Pro BPB80L2510	BLB	89	65
	Stihl BR 700x*	GLB	99	75
	RedMax EBZ8500*	GLB	101	77

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# Noise from multiple blowers

	Brand	Type	Number of Leaf Blowers @ 50' (dBA)			
			1*	2	3	4
	EGO LB6003	BLB	64	67	69	70
	Greenworks Pro BPB80L2510	BLB	65	68	70	71
	Stihl BR 700x	GLB	75	78	80	81
	RedMax EBZ8500	GLB	77	80	82	83

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\* ANSI B175.2-2012; ANSI: American National Standards Institute; dBA: A-weighted decibels



# How loud is 80dBA?

- This is 3 Stihl GLBs, a common configuration
- This is 18 times an ambient noise level of 55dBA
- This is 6 times the maximum increase in noise allowed under current state and Lexington code





# GLB restrictions elsewhere

- **At least 170 communities have regulated GLBs**
- **Many have imposed seasonal limitations similar to Article 10**
  - Including Brookline, Cambridge, Lincoln, and Newton
- **A growing number of communities have prohibited GLB use entirely**
  - Began in CA communities
  - Becoming more common in the Northeast, e.g., Washington, DC, Larchmont, NY, and Chevy Chase, MD



# Hourly limits, all equipment

## **Allowed under current law:**

Monday-Saturday, 7 AM – 9 PM

## **Allowed under Article 10**

### **– Contractors:**

Monday – Friday: 7 AM – 6 PM

Saturday: 9 AM – 5 PM

## **Additional hours for residents:**

Monday – Friday: 6 PM – 8 PM

Sunday, legal holidays: 9 AM – 5 PM



# GLB seasonal restrictions

- **Seasonal limits, effective May 2022:**
  - **Fall cleanup, September 15 – December 30**
  - **Spring cleanup, March 15 – May 31**



# Responsibility and penalties

- Both residents and contractors are responsible for compliance
- Penalties:
  - First offense: up to \$50
  - Second offense: up to \$100
  - Third and subsequent offenses: up to \$200



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